

HEPARIN IN PSORIASIS

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Ten patients with chronic stable psoriasis of more than three years duration were treated with injection heparin 2500 IU subcutaneously twice a day for 7 days. Six patients showed aggravation. Three showed no response and one patient improved and went into remission after 6 months.

Key words: Psoriasis, Heparin

Introduction

Heparin is claimed to act as a magic cure in acute psoriasis.¹ This effect was first noticed by Alexander of Glasgow in a psoriatic patient who had heparin treatment for concomitant phlebitis. But it soon relapsed. Wilson also reported two patients with severe psoriasis and coronary heart disease, whose skin lesions cleared dramatically with heparin therapy.² There have been no further reports on heparin in psoriasis.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in 1989 in the Dermatology Department of Calicut Medical College, Kerala. Ten patients with chronic stable psoriasis of more than three years duration were chosen for the study. A written consent was obtained after explaining the procedure. Patients were hospitalised and routine

haemogram, bleeding and clotting parameters, liver and renal function tests were done to rule out any systemic disease. All modalities of treatment were stopped a week prior to injections.

Ten patients were given injection heparin 2500 IU subcutaneously twice a day for 7 days. They were assessed one week and one month after completion of treatment and graded as per the criteria of Melski et al.³ Ten patients were given an ointment containing 6% liquor picis carb and 3% salicylic acid to be applied locally and were assessed at the end of one month using the same criteria.

Results

Six patients (60%) worsened with increase in itching and redness of lesions and eruption of new lesion. Three patients (30%) showed no change. One patient (10%) showed definite improvement with partial flattening of plaques at the end of one month and was in remission after six months. Eight percent of patients on coal tar showed partial flattening of plaques at

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the end of one month. Fischer's exact test ($P=0.0000$) showed that heparin was not found to be beneficial in psoriasis.

Discussion

Beneficial effect was noted only in one

Table I. Response to treatment after 1 month

Degree of response	No. of patients	
	Inj heparin	coal tar
-1	6 (60%)	1 (10%)
0	3 (30%)	1 (10%)
+1	--	7 (70%)
+2	1 (10%)	1 (10%)
+3	--	--
+4	--	--

case following injection heparin. Other factors like a change in environment produced by hospitalisation, repeated injection producing a placebo effect or a natural remission could have been responsible for the beneficial effect in this case. The aggravation noted in 60% of patients on injection heparin is contradictory to the reports made by others.^{1,2}

References

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